



THE IMPROVEMENT OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES USING PRIMING AS A TECHNIQUE

An experiment on semantics

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Bachelor's Thesis

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT OF
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Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the possibility of certain influences semantics priming may have on the how people perceive different variables of diversity. From this basis, it suggests that semantics priming can be a useful tool for organizations to incorporate into their diversity management strategies.

Summary

An experiment was conceived and conducted four times in order to gather insights into how participants view different diversity factors. The data was first collected in qualitative form from a pool of 20 participants and then translated into a quantitative approach to produce conclusive findings.

Conclusions

The experiment proved that there was an observable influence on the participants' perception of diversity. Although there were limitations to the methodology, it still produced a reasonable conclusion that semantics played a role in affecting people's opinions on diversity factors.

Key words: diversity, diversity management, priming, semantics priming, strategy.

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I. Introduction

1.1. Background

Diversity in the workplace and the approaches towards it have always been a complicated issue. Although many firms recognize the potential benefits of managing their diversity, the problems entailed are deceptively trickier than just granting employment to people of different backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, age, level of specialization, personality, etc.

While it is of relative ease and convenience to draft up a token diverse workplace, the ultimate goal of diversity management is how to make these differences a valuable asset to the whole organizational effectiveness, which is unfortunately where firms seem to struggle the most. With regards to this pressing need of having a systematic model to assist organizations in their quest of finding the most effective strategies for managing diversity, many paradigms and models have come into existence over the years, which serve as provisionally helpful guidelines for managers to follow (Thomas and Ely, 1996). However, not all paradigms have been proven to be conducive to enabling success, and the question of what constitutes the absolute catalyst factor that facilitates the diversity management process remains abstruse and disputed. Diversity management schemes also suffer from a reputation of superficiality and ineffectiveness, which is fueled by arguments that organizations adopt diversity practices merely as a façade and have no legitimate concerns regarding fostering and strengthening the force of diversity as they have constantly purported to (Wrench, 2005; Bergen et al., 2012).

Given this background, this study will attempt to attain a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of diversity management, its potential benefits as well as the criticism surrounding its practice. In addition, it is of the proposal of this thesis that priming would be incorporated as an aiding technique for managers to control their organizational diversity. Since workforce demographics are diversifying rapidly right now, this thesis hopes to contribute to the gamut of literature available on the topic of managing workplace diversity.

1.2. Research problem

One crucial factor that determines whether certain diversity management efforts succeed or fail is the way with which organizations, more specifically the people that constitute such organizations, perceive diversity in their workplace. Should this perception be constructed upon a discriminatory or ethnocentric outlook on individual and cultural differences, attempts at managing diversity effectively will be unlikely to reach fruition, since employees or staff members will have difficulty internalizing the notion of diversity beyond a superficial level. To examine whether such a subconscious and implicit mechanism can be manipulated to generate better appreciation of diversity management and its benefits, this thesis attempts to bridge this gap with the use of a psychological tool known technically as ‘priming’, which has been known to have the power to alter the inner workings of the brain at a subconscious level.

Simultaneously, this study also aims to provide additional data into how priming techniques, particularly semantics priming, can be utilized within an organizational setting. While there have been many experiments conducted in order to identify and gauge the extent to which priming factors influence the human behavior, such experiments are often contextualized within situations that encompass more informality. Regarding similar experiments and their effectiveness in a more professional environment, there appears to be a paucity of those among current literature. This study seeks to fill in this gap and produce consequential results that can benefit future managers in the process of strategizing their diversity management efforts.

1.3. Research questions and objectives

In order to address the proposed research problem discussed above, this thesis will concentrate on the following research question:

Is there a relationship between the way diversity is perceived and different semantics? Can semantics priming be applied to manipulate perception of different types of diversity?

This main research question is the core basis of this thesis. It explores the possible connection between the field of psychological priming and its applicability to diversity management strategies. In order to attain a satisfactory and thoroughly profound answer, two smaller sub-questions are proposed, which attempt to clarify the two main areas of interest this study hopes to address:

- Does semantics priming produce a clear and pronounced influence on the way participants perceive diversity?
- Suppose that an effect indeed happens as a result of priming, how reliable and practical is the adoption of semantics priming as a technique to accommodate diversity management schemes in the workplace?

The objectives of these questions are to record the effects of semantics priming on altering the perceptions and existing preconceptions on individual differences, evaluate their efficacy and practicality of such implementation, as well as gaining insights into the mechanism of priming, including its preconditions and criteria that facilitate its effectiveness that ultimately leads to the overall assessment of priming as a psychological tool.

In general, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the implications of utilizing semantics priming in order to augment the diversity management process, which is predicated on the belief that priming actually prompts appreciable influences on individual subconscious judgements. Such objectives can be achieved through a detailed literature review on prominent literature concerning priming and diversity management and an experiment where semantics priming is used to produce noticeable influences on how

people perceive diversity. In order to establish a clear direction for this thesis, a main hypothesis (H1) is formulated below:

H1: Semantics priming influences the perception of different types of diversity that exist within the organization, which in turn resulting in influences in thoughts and behaviors.

The main hypothesis above can also be broken down into smaller hypotheses so as to address the various nuances the research is aiming to cover. For the purpose of the research, 'positive semantics priming' is defined as semantics priming using positive connotations, whereas 'negative semantics priming' refers to semantics priming using negative connotations. These hypotheses serve as the conceptual foundation for the study conducted for this thesis.

H1a: Positive semantics priming induces more positive value judgements.

H1b: Negative semantics priming induces more negative value judgements.

H1c: Positive semantics priming encourages acceptance of friendly associations and interactions amongst people.

H1d: Negative semantics priming discourages acceptance of friendly associations and interactions amongst people.

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured into six discrete sections. The first one provides introductory background information on diversity management as well as establishing the research problem and research questions that lay the foundation for the study entailed in the paper. It is immediately followed by a thorough literature review, which explores the stance of existing literature on the topic of interest and provides a meaningful conceptual framework to guide the research. Then, the methodology section will explain the process of

conducting an experiment and gathering data. It is succeeded by a detailed data analysis and thorough discussion in order to see whether the findings corroborate or contradict with the hypothesis as well as examining their meaningfulness and relevance to the proposed problem. Finally, the conclusion will reiterate the main findings with regards to the research questions, in addition to pinpointing the current limitations of this study and providing recommendations for future studies that plan to embark upon similar directions.

II. Literature Review

The majority of literature centering on diversity management focuses on how to recognize and facilitate different types of diversity, which this literature review will concentrate extensively on. Other topics to be discussed include theories for management and how several different diversity variables are perceived in the workplace environment. Additionally, certain literature on behavioral priming will also be examined in relation to its potential implications on managing diversity. After both fields of literature have been review in detail, a connection between them will be formulated which ties the two concepts together and establish the relevance between priming and perception of diversity, the very relationship serves as the groundwork for the experiment included in the thesis.

2.1. Diversity management

2.1.1. Definitions

The term ‘diversity’, in the context of this paper, refers to the scope of differences in ‘ethnicity/nationality, gender, function, ability, language, religion, lifestyle, or tenure (Kossek and Lobel, 1996). In a more professional setting, ‘diversity’ refers to ‘workplace diversity’, which constitutes the various backgrounds of employees as well as their multiple cultural differences and intellectual capability (Bassett-Jones, 2005). It is often theorized that a diverse combination of people within the organization will drive its innovation capacity and result in better overall performance. Likewise, working environment will also be met with substantial positive changes due to the harboring of diverse and well-blended mindsets.

Diversity management, as defined by Gilbert et al. (1999), is a ‘voluntary organizational program designed to create greater inclusion of all individuals into informal social networks and formal company programs’. A later article by Invancevich and Gilbert (2000) elaborates upon this idea by specifying the definition to include ‘recruit, retain, reward, and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees’. The term’s interpretation has evolved

constantly over the years, as Bassett-Jones (2005) added that it needs to be a 'systematic and planned commitment on the part of organizations'. Although the concept itself is nothing new and has actually been circulating around for several decades, it has never been of more importance than it is in this day and age. Given that future labor forces will most likely originate from non-Caucasian countries (Cox and Blake, 1991), it is imperative for companies to partake in managing their workplace diversity in order to maintain a competitive position on the market. For instance, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), according to their 2010 estimate on racial demographics in the United States, reported that people of Caucasian descent accounted for slightly over 70 percent of the entire population. Given that this figure had been obtained almost a decade ago, it could be assumed that there have been substantial deviations from it in a declining trend as population continues to diversify racially. A more recent estimate in 2017 reveals that almost 27 percent of the population fall within the age group of 55 and above and the male to female ratio is 0,97, which means there is roughly an equal number of male and female representation in most settings. These statistics highlight the ongoing trends of diversity taking place all over the United States. However, this is more of a worldwide phenomenon than something exclusive to any one particular country or nation. As the global immigration crisis unfolds and feminism movements progress, organizations need to adapt shrewd strategies to adapt into the current social and political climate without compromising their core values and beliefs.

2.1.2. Potential benefits

Effective diversity management has been proven to have a direct correlation to organizational success, specifically across six dimensions, namely 'cost, attraction of human resources, marketing success, creativity and innovation, problem-solving quality, and organizational flexibility' (Cox and Blake, 1991). The consensus reached is that effectual diversity management reduces expenses, enhances marketing efforts towards minority communities, augments creativity as well as problem-solving quality, and improves operational flexibility.

Cost-wise, if an organization fumbles in integrating minority or female employees into the workplace, there are risks of unnecessary expenses incurred as a result of poor management. In addition, well-executed management strategies reduce employees' turnover rate, which consequently reduces turnover costs as well. A great scheme for managing diversity will also reflect favorably on the attractiveness and desirability of the company, thereby elevating its chances of recruiting high quality personnel in a time of competitive labor acquisition. On a different note, as the market expands and becoming more and more culturally segmented, having representations from a multitude of cultures facilitates the process of understanding the consumers' needs and responding to these growing demands. A culturally diverse image will also potentially serve as a point of self-identification and resonance among consumer groups, which bolsters brand awareness and loyalty in the mind of customers. Furthermore, a diverse workplace fuels creativity as additional insights and ideas circulate around the organization, some of which might never have come to existence in a highly homogeneous demographic. Due to the various perspectives available and the flexibility to extricate from conservative conformity of predecessors, organizations can reap the benefits of enhancing their problem-solving skills by taking advantage of diversity as its newly-discovered crucial asset.

In order to enjoy such benefits, however, organizations need to make critical assessments of its own performance and achieve transformations within themselves. Cox and Blake (1991) contends that there exist five key conditions that need being taken into consideration before a traditional organization reconstructs itself into a multicultural one: leadership, training, research, analysis and change of culture and human resource management systems, and follow-up. Meaningful changes need to entail full commitment from top management levels, which extends beyond mere oral support and commonplace suggestions. Leaders of organizations must make sure to incorporate the message of diversity into communication channels and provide the necessary financial and administrative backing, all the while evaluating the worthiness of the enacted policies in the long run. Also, current workforce within organizations need to undergo managing and valuing diversity training in order to improve awareness on diversity and acknowledge cultural insensitive behaviors. It is important to view training not as a complete entity of

its own or a singular attempt, but rather an organizational tool to use in collaboration with other efforts and an ongoing process of education that accrues over time. Research and analysis are also significant components, as they help to highlight the issues and complications to be addressed in the training process and also locate the root of those problems. Finally, follow-up concerns with the monitoring the implementations of policies and consistent evaluation of their effectiveness. Much like training, follow-up should be treated as an ongoing process in order to properly manage accountability and efforts.

Interactive activities between diverse members within top management teams are also found to promote better team performance. However, the positive effects of diversity are more pronounced for profession-related diversity variables as opposed to other less occupationally relevant types (Simons et al., 1999). Firms with better diversity are also valued better among consumers and prospective job applicants. In addition to the burgeoning global trend of inclusiveness and tolerance, these benefits add to the ever-increasing number of reasons why organizations should seriously take its diversity management program into meticulous consideration, as they can generate great values for the business and improve overall image.

2.1.3. Potential problems

On the other hand, diversity management runs the risk of being improperly handled, the consequences of which include reverse discrimination against the majority group, reinforcement of problematic stereotypes, as well as potential liabilities concerning legal issues (Bergen et al., 2002). While most initiatives to manage diversity are well-meaning, their results are sometimes questionable and end up exacerbating the problems they were supposed to resolve or alleviate. An egregious error that relates to this issue is the association of diversity management to affirmative actions, which distorts the value of employees of diverse backgrounds. Employments made under affirmative actions have resulted in the said employees feeling that they are only recruited to fulfill a specific quota, and that they are expected to submit subpar work. Furthermore, it creates an overwhelming sense of being interlopers, or “token appointments”, for the minority staff.

As diversity management is occasionally referred to as a diluted version of affirmative actions, skepticism remains over its effectiveness in the long run (Wrench, 2005).

On the same note, Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) argued that such efforts can perpetuate inequalities instead of making positive changes in the workplace. By over-emphasizing the differences between staff members, organizations may create tension and divisiveness instead of workplace cohesion. A sudden and aggressive push for acceptance of cultural and racial difference among diverse also usually results in further repulsion for the majority and demoralization for the minority. Another criticism of diversity management does not focus on the technicality errors of its execution but impugns the veracity of its contributory effectiveness for enhancing workplace performance. Eckel and Grossman (2005) conducted a research in which they explored the possible link between fostering team identity among members and overall productivity. Their result indicated that the effects created team identification has on collaborative efforts are minimal and inconsequential, and therefore are not worth squandering resources on. The concurrent conclusion ensuing from this discourse is fixated on the potency of diversity movement and whether it helps or hinders organizational progress.

At the center of these challenging problems lies the root cause: diversity management is “too simplistic” (Wrench, 2005). It is argued that the concept of diversity management itself revolves around the equal employment opportunities for all, and when it is removed from that specific context, it struggles to remain meaningful. It is further elaborated that the notion of diversity management exists merely as an ideology that obfuscates the prevalent inequalities that have been and are still bedeviling society. Therefore, the possibility of such impracticality solving the distressingly complicated problems of inequity simply stretches the very boundaries of credulity. The emphases that are placed on mentoring and communication within the organization overshadow the fundamental core of structural equity on which affirmative actions were originally constructed. Wrench (2005) insisted that, in spite of their apparent concerns about equal opportunities of employment and advancement, celebratory policies regarding diversity is too simplistic and idealistic to curtail the systematic discrimination that has been so intricately woven

into the fabric of society. For minority groups who have been historically disenfranchised for generations, the convoluted problems and the struggles will naturally perpetuate.

2.1.4. Diversity management paradigms

Usually when executing diversity management initiatives, companies utilize either of these two approaches: encouraging people of minority to seamlessly assimilate or relegating them to positions with specifications directly germane to their backgrounds, often involving them interfacing with consumer groups of the same demographic factors (Thomas and Ely, 1996).

The former technique is known as the Discrimination-and-Fairness paradigm, whereas the latter is entitled the Access-and-Legitimacy paradigm. As Thomas and Ely (1996) noted, there exists both benefits and shortcomings to these paradigms. Most prominently, the Discrimination-and-Fairness paradigm accomplishes its goal of promoting equal treatment and mutual respect while aggrandizing demographic diversity. Nonetheless, its fatal limitation lies in the way it reduces employees to exact duplicates of one another for the sake of fairness and completely discredits the notion that differences may generate more potent ways of working. On a similar page, while the Access-and-Legitimacy model succeeds in creating competitive advantages for organizations, it egregiously forces minority employees into specialized pigeonholes without much consideration for their actual capabilities and what they can offer in the line of mainstream business. Both of these paradigms, having critical flaws of their own, call for another model of handling workplace diversity whereby the minority perspective is included into more than just niche marketing campaigns and encouraged to thrive by executive management teams.

Due to the limitations of the aforementioned paradigms, Thomas and Ely (1996) came to the conclusion that another model was needed to address both the dimensions of assimilation and differentiation. The Learning-and-Effectiveness paradigm for managing diversity, which essentially conflates the benefits and surpasses the shortcomings of its predecessors, satisfies this need. Specifically, a firm operating by this model will

incorporate employees' differences into its assets, while still promoting equal treatment for all. Hence, it will avoid the management pitfalls of either turning a blind eye to demographic differences or secluding staff members with those differences into customized pigeonholes. In other words, this paradigm revolves around the theme of internalization and integration, which expands the organization's capacity to grow and seize new opportunities. To help companies that are still plagued with the tough question of managing their diversity effectively, the article also outlines eight key preconditions that must be fulfilled before making the crucial paradigm shift. These vital stipulations are as follows:

- People at positions of leadership must have an understanding that diversity constitutes different perspectives and procedures and that the pluralism of opinions enriches organizational knowledge.
- Managers must realize that differences in opinions present both challenges and learning opportunities.
- High-quality performance from every staff member is the expected norm.
- The organizational culture must be conducive to encouraging personal growth and bringing out certain skills and knowledge.
- Openness and tolerance for constructive criticism must be intricately woven into the workplace culture.
- Employees should feel that their contributions and efforts are appreciated and derive satisfaction from their jobs.
- The organization's mission should be clearly articulated and sends a unified message to employees at every level.
- The organizational structure must be, to a certain extent, relatively straightforward and nonbureaucratic.

2.2. Types of diversity

While diversity remains a general umbrella term, many dimensions and nuances are subsumed under it and cannot be addressed with only one shared panacea approach.

There has been a plethora of articles covering the various facets of diversity and how to manage them individually. Among these literature, the most prominent areas of concern that stand out are the discussion of gender, age, and racial diversity. These three areas are of particular interest because they cover primarily the most conspicuous properties that are most commonly associated with the concept of diversity, as well as being most likely to engender negative stereotypes. However, they concern different grounds in terms of relevance to organizational productivity. Gender diversity is often regarded as a binary competition between men and women in executive positions and frequently affiliated with discussions about the glass ceiling and equal remuneration for both genders doing equivalent work, whereas racial diversity encompasses an extended and more troubling version of that due to the capacious gamut of various races and ethnicities. Age diversity, in a somewhat similar vein, revolves around the modulation and management of conflicts and dynamics between different age groups, which are characterized into generations. Although intrinsically different in their core concepts, all three areas focus on the eradicating the unjust mistreatment of minority groups and building a cohesive and productive workplace upon the shared belief that differences fuel excellence. While the scope of what workplace diversity constitutes include other more ambiguous and overlooked components such as religion and education level, they will not be examined in the context of this paper.

2.2.1. Gender diversity

Gender diversity in the workplace has always been an exemplary case of organizational dualism. The dilemma of female representation in executive positions has attracted a lot of attention as well as a fair share of controversy (Gallego-Álvarez et al., 2010). As outlined by Johns (2013), although the education level and workforce positions of women have steadily increased throughout the years, they still face immense obstacles which hamper their advancement to the higher echelons of organizations. This phenomenon is commonly known as the 'glass ceiling', which Johns (2013) defined as a 'metaphor for the invisible and artificial barriers that block women and minorities from advancing up the corporate ladder to management and executive positions'. As of 2011, only a measly 16,1

percent of the board seats of the Forbes 500 companies were occupied by women, leaving the astronomical remainders to their male counterparts. This accentuates the ongoing problematic situation of women being underrepresented in the corporate world. In contrast with the 'glass ceiling', women also face immense obstacles early on in their professional careers by having to remain in low-level and low-pay positions for long periods of time. This phenomenon is known as the 'sticky floor', which disproportionately affects women working in clerical or service jobs (Carli, 2015). Both the 'glass ceiling' and the 'sticky floor' are unfortunately still widely pervasive, and they hamper the advancement of women to higher positions as well as limiting their growth potential. These problems are further exacerbated in traditionally male-dominated fields such as STEM or construction, where women are judged based on stricter standards than are men. Hence, women are often underestimated by their potentials and have to prove their competency consistently and repeatedly (Cundiff and Vescio, 2016).

One prominent cause for gender discrimination and the lack of gender diversity in executive positions is common gender stereotyping. Men are normally perceived as and expected to be goal-oriented, assertive, autonomous and rational, whereas for women, these descriptive traits tend to lean more towards being communal, emotional, and obedient. Beliefs regarding the appropriateness of male and female behavior also tend to stand in direct opposition to each other, with women viewed as lacking the prevailing characteristics that men possess and vice versa (Heilman, 2012). These shortcut thought processes are heavily contributive to the normative attitude that women are unfit to be in managerial positions because they are too sentimental and lenient, which discounts women promptly without considering their qualifications. Heilman (2012) argued that, should a woman successfully transcend these normative standards, or even should the standards be thought to have been transcended because of a woman's success, it will trigger condemnation and social exclusion. As problematic as gender bias is, it is not restricted to any specific region or country. William and Best (1990) found that when participants of 25 countries were asked to categorize adjectives according to gender connotation, there was a lot similarity and agreement in keeping with the traditional concept of male and female stereotypes, which proved that gender stereotyping is a

widespread phenomenon across people of many different cultures and customs. Furthermore, it has been found that gender bias is generally more perceptible to women as the disadvantaged group than to men, which creates another dilemma concerning top managers' reluctance to address gender discrepancies due to their biological obliviousness (Cundiff and Vescio, 2016).

Despite the negative connotation associated with women in leadership positions, introducing more women into the composition of company boards of directors can have positive impacts on the overall performance. Such impacts are delineated to be profound, which includes boosting the corporate value, enabling fresh perspectives to be considered in the decision-making process, and generating a more resourceful base for knowledge, creativity, and innovation (Gallego-Álvarez et al., 2010; Campbell and Mínguez-Vera, 2007). However, diversification of gender also underscored the growing risk of conflicts and could stagnate the process of decision-making, which renders the organization extremely vulnerable in the face of competitive rivalries where speed is of the essence.

2.2.2. Age diversity

As the labor force undergoes significant transformations spurred on by low birth rates and extended longevity, organizations must contemplate the conscious move of recruiting and retaining older, more experienced employees. Consequently, there has been a surge in age diversity among companies, and the effects it entails are unequivocal. However, research on this subject has yielded conflicted results, ranging from it having no consequential effects to both having positive and negative impacts on company operation (Kunze et al., 2010).

Bell and Narz (2007) claimed that, nowadays, a modern firm's staff is consisted of multiple generations working together, the most prevailing among them being the Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (also widely known as Millennials). The Baby Boomers, who are named after a drastic spike in birth rates during the 1940s and leading up to the

early and mid-1960s, have had the largest impact on the economy due to their sheer size of roughly 76 million (Clark, 2017). By the same token of definition, Generation X refers to people born between 1965 and 1980, and Generation Y to people born between 1981 and 2000, the start of the new millennium. Although there are arguments surrounding the exact birth years of each generation and whether such periods can be accurately pinpointed, it is generally understood that Baby Boomers are influenced by a time of political turmoil characterized by the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War, whereas Generation X by a newfound sense of self-reliance and independence and Generation Y by the advent of the Internet and other technological advances. Due to the fact that different generations hold different values and are influenced by different turns of events throughout history, they are highly likely to produce conflicts and misunderstandings when having to work together, a phenomenon underscored by the 'generation gap' (Bengtson, 1970).

Due to the realities of demography, managers must strive to both appeal to younger workers and entice the older, more experienced segments out of early retirement. However, as the age gap among the workforce widens, the diversification is found to correlate with increased levels of perceived age discrimination as well as implicitly influencing employees' communal sense of commitment in a negative manner (Kunze et al., 2010). This counteractive effect understandably translates to a reduction in overall organizational performance and work morale.

2.2.3. Racial diversity

Racial diversity underlines a crucial dilemma for organizations, especially more so in this day and age than ever before. As Cox and Blake (1991) pointed out, the labor market is expanding rapidly, and the traditionally ideal Caucasian males will soon no longer be in the majority. Instead, we are experiencing a pivotal period where people of minority groups and people of mixed races are becoming more and more prevalently represented in the racial demography of prospective employees. Due to this gradual movement, it is of paramount importance for managers to acknowledge the gravity of how these

upcoming changes affect the organizational operations and adapt accordingly. However, adapting to an unfamiliar reality appears to be particularly challenging for managers, whose implicit and explicit biases have resulted in unfair evaluation of competent applicants. It has also been found that in the United States, despite claims arguing that racial discrimination in hiring has declined over the years, the rate of discrimination based on race and ethnicity has remained relatively constant, barring minor irregularities in situational cases. Specifically, Caucasian job applicants have received on average 36% and 24% more callbacks than their African American and Latinos counterparts respectively, which reflects on the egregiously biased treatment people of minority consistently fall victim to (Quillian et al., 2017). Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) also arrived at largely the same findings, which noted that minority applicants of equivalent levels of competency as majority candidates need to submit approximately 50 percent more applications in order to receive an invitation for interview. It would seem that, even in spite of all the shifts in the labor market, non-white applicants still retain the utmost advantage in seeking employment as opposed to more ethnically diverse groups.

Similar troubling conclusions were reached in an experiment conducted by Gilbert et al. (2003), which explored the problem of racial discrimination in the workplace. They hypothesized, based on status incongruity theory, that there exists a hierarchy of demographic characteristics that according to which, certain traits, irrespective of competency, appeal to employers more than others. Ethnically speaking, the established ranking goes from Whites, Chinese, Native Americans, Japanese, Mexicans, to African Americans at the very bottom of the list. Their experiment involved distributing a fictional sample of work histories, which comprised 32 Euro-Americans and 95 people of color, to 127 undergraduate students and asking them to judge the fictitious applicants for two types of positions: chemical engineer or human resource officer. The findings corroborated with their hypothesis, as they indicated that people of African American descent endured the most negative stereotypes during the job application process, even while possessing equal qualifications and performance history. Some of these stereotypes include impoliteness, proneness to violence, indolence, lack of intelligence, and irresponsibility. Similarly plagued by stereotypes were Asian Americans, who were

viewed as thrifty, diligent, non-confrontational, and having condescending attitudes towards people who they deemed were less intellectually capable. Gilbert et al. (2000) concluded by addressing implications for human resources managers, who can, more often than not, be subconsciously influenced by their internalized bias. Managers need to be aware of their stereotyping tendencies in order to evaluate and assess prospective applicants fairly. Furthermore, it is recommended that managers view the cultural differences as an asset and determine how they can assimilate these strengths into professional roles and enhance overall performance as a result.

2.3. Priming

The purpose of this section is to examine existing literature on the topic of psychological priming. A thorough comprehension of what priming is and how it is utilized to evoke unwitting responses through exposure to seemingly irrelevant concepts will help lay the foundation for the use of priming in constructing a more effective and conducive workplace. The general idea is that, if certain elements within the work environment can be tweaked to manipulate the workings of the brain, it can positively impact the way people interact and conduct themselves. Such interferences can be surreptitiously subtle, such as adjusting the air conditioning to trigger heat priming, refurbishing the workplace interior with different colors to condition different stimuli to staff members, or altering words and phrases to have more positive connotations so as to induce positivity for employees.

2.3.1. Definition

In order to gauge the applicability of priming, it is first crucial to be acquainted to the concept. Priming, most frequently used as a term in psychology, is the practice whereby exposure to one stimulus elicits a reaction to another stimulus, often without conscious awareness or deliberate intent (Weingarten et al., 2016). Although it is unclear how long the priming effects persists after they have been instigated, these effects can span across nearly all forms of social representation (Bargh, 2006). Other researchers have pointed

out that although priming also occurs between different modalities and semantics, its effects are decidedly more pronounced when both stimuli happen in the same modality (Zurif et al., 1993). For instance, visual priming factors are shown to have certain effects on olfactory recognition, but these effects are not as clear as those observed in an intramodal olfactory-olfactory condition (Koenig et al., 2000). There are multiple types of priming and the topic has attracted a proliferation of literature in social psychology, making it a hotly debated issue to address.

2.3.2. Common types of priming

One common method of priming is using related words and phrases, also known terminologically as semantic priming. As explicated by Rossell et al. (2001), this technique revolves around the processing and conceptualizing of a targeted word or concept, which is spurred on through exposure to another word. The step of processing the related word usually takes place after an interval of several seconds. Through semantic priming, researchers have uncovered patterns of cerebral activities that determine our voluntary and involuntary responses of connecting words with similar meanings together, the discovery of which helps to shed some light on the inner linguistic working of the brain. For the purpose of this thesis, this medium of priming will be of most concern, due to its being the chosen technique used to conduct the experiment in this study.

Visual priming is also particularly common, and one such technique is using colors to transmit subliminally coded messages. Gerend and Sias (2009) found that the color red is believed to convey a sense of urgency and threat. Furthermore, their study showed that priming the color red to warnings amplified their effects and induced feelings of anxiety and insecurity in people. Similarly, Kliger and Gilad (2012) conducted a study on how colors influence the decisions-making process of financial investors. The results show that priming the color red increased the subjective anticipation and acceptance of impending loss, whereas priming the color green had an opposite impact. These findings have practical implications, as they demonstrate how subtle details can play a critical role in persuasiveness by surreptitiously influencing our perceptions of everything.

2.3.3. Criticism

Although the practice of priming has been applied pervasively, it is by no means exempt from criticism. One such claim is that redoing priming experiments may fail to reproduce their initial findings, even when using larger samples and controlling for limitations and errors (Doyen et al., 2012). This inconsistency casts doubts on the very legitimacy of priming theories itself, in addition to raising suspicions of manipulation being in effect. Furthermore, it lends itself to being a solid argument against the reliability of behavioral priming. Doyen et al. (2012) also suggested that priming alone is insufficient to prompt observable changes. Additionally, should the objective of the experiment be compromised to volunteers at any time during its execution, either due to technical problems or other missteps, it will defeat the purpose of the experiment since the subjects will have known at least vaguely that their behaviors have been monitored. Another criticism refers to the fact that priming can be susceptible to biases, particularly response bias, which is the tendency of volunteers to submit misleading answers to the administrators of the experiment. However, color priming was found to be an exception to this bias mechanism. Although some slight intermittent delays might occur, it does not necessarily equate to the response process being tampered with (Pace et al., 1997).

2.4. Potential relationship between priming and diversity management

This literature review has covered the basic definitions of diversity and diversity management that will be of main use in the thesis. Particularly, the notion of diversity has been shown to be more complex and multifaceted than conventionally believed. Furthermore, diversity management entails many different practices pertaining to the nurturing and facilitating of differences within the organizational structure. In addition, key terms and concepts relevant to diversity have also been briefly outlined. The subsequent part of this review discusses the psychological technique of priming, including its application and drawbacks.

These two areas of literature are examined on the basis that priming can provide assistance to diversity management, a process whose core essentially centers around interacting with people and managing those relationships. Although institutionalized biases often impede and limit the effectiveness of meaningful interactions, behavioral priming can provide a way to poke through these barriers. Such a connection is built upon the foundation of priming intervening subtly with people's behaviors, attitudes, thought processes, reactions, creative endeavors, as well as tolerance. When people are primed to behave diplomatically and steer clear of negative connotations, coupled with the benefits of diversity, it helps bringing out the best collective effort in the whole organization. By having a certain degree of control over this intervention and directing its influences towards value-adding activities, priming can help overcoming the reservations people retain about the idea of diversity and also fueling the diversity management process. Within the scope of this thesis, semantics priming will be of primary focus. Although other types of priming are also known to have produced meaningful results, they will not be examined for the purpose of this research.

2.5. Conceptual framework

From the review of existing literature on diversity management and priming as well as the proposed hypotheses, a conceptual framework for the thesis is formulated and illustrated in Figure 1 below. This model strings together to key concepts previously elaborated in the literature review and establishes their connection to one another. By doing this, it provides a bigger, more general picture of the relationship between concepts and the direction taken in this thesis.

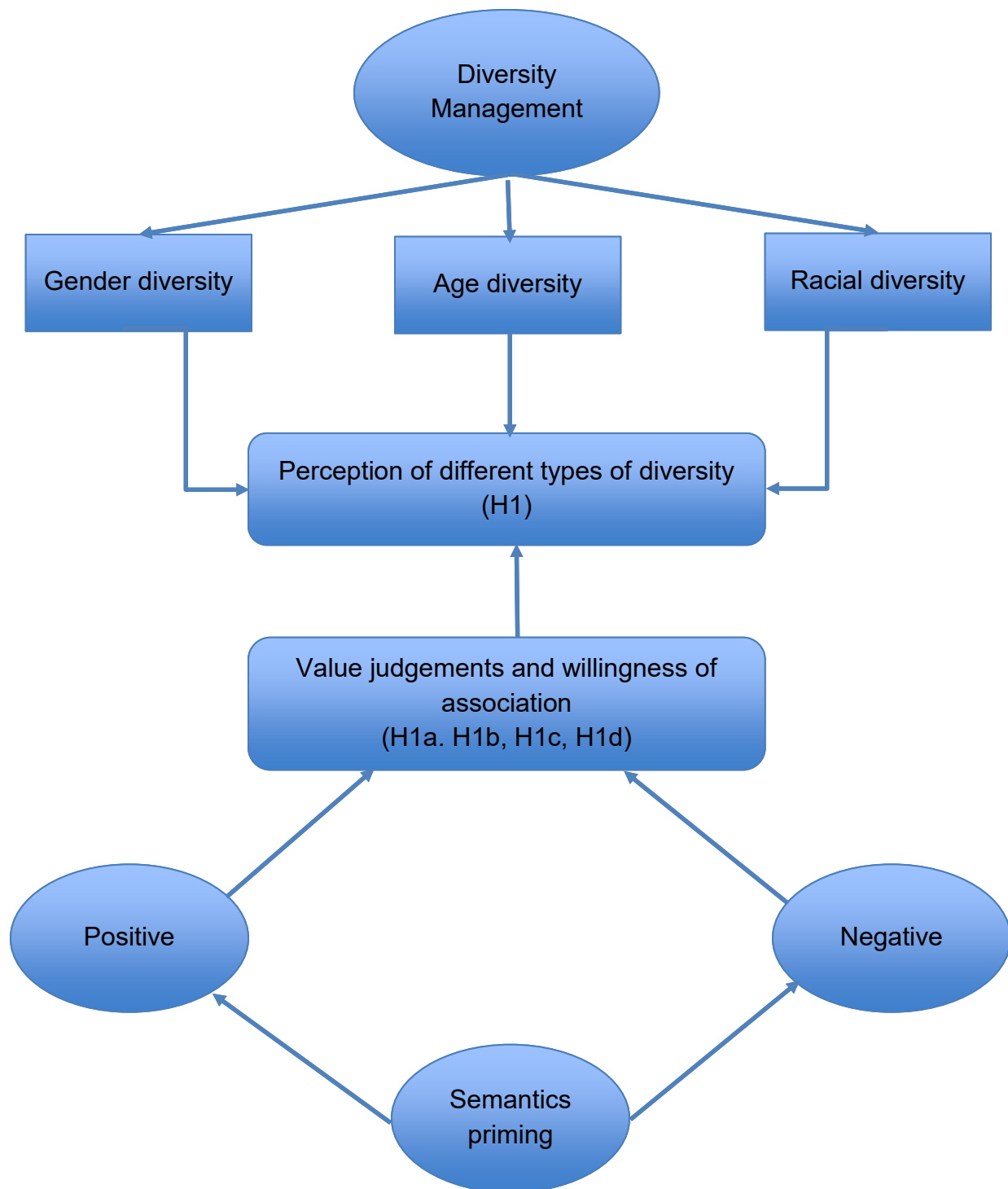


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

III. Methodology

This section will serve to elaborate on how the experiment conceived for the purpose of this thesis was conducted and explain the rationale behind the choice of research method. It will cover the experiment design, its step-by-step description as well as the process of data collection and analysis. The overall aim of this section is to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the research in this thesis was conceptualized, constructed, and moderated.

3.1. Experiment design

Due to the fact that priming effects are difficult to measure in a quantifiable manner, this thesis opts for the choice of gathering qualitative data through the use of experiment, where participants are exposed to priming factors and their responses will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. As the aim of the thesis is not only to identify whether or not priming produce observable effects but also to gauge the extent of such influences, qualitative data collection proves more appropriate since it enables participants to voice their opinions more clearly and uninhibitedly, which accommodates the process by providing answers encompassing more nuances that are not always available when data is obtained numerically (Cooper and Schindler, 2014). However, after the initial garnering of qualitative data, the data will be transferred into a direction more germane to quantitative analysis in order to identify the patterns and trends among participants' responses.

The experiment is designed upon the belief that under the influences of different types of semantics, namely positive and negative ones, participants will be unwittingly manipulated into providing opinions more closely associated to the end of the spectrum they are primed with. The experiment is also interested in measuring and documenting the extent to which participants are influenced by semantics, and how this influence translates into thoughts and behaviors.

3.2. Experiment description

This section goes into details of the process of conducting the experiment. The process is split into two separate stages: selecting participants and moderating the experiment. Each step, including preparation and execution, will be thoroughly delineated in their sub-sections accordingly in the intention of providing an accurate and complete description of conducting such a study.

3.2.1. Participants selection

The experiment aims to elaborate upon the issues of whether semantics priming produces an observable effect on the perception of organizational diversity. Twenty volunteers, all of whom are business students at Aalto University and were uninformed about the purpose of the experiment so as to avoid biases, were selected to participate in the experiment. Due to the largely homogeneous representation of nationalities and cultures in Mikkeli, all the volunteers that were chosen belong to either one of the two most prominent group of students on campus: Finnish and Vietnamese. Among the participants, thirteen (65%) of them are Vietnamese and seven (35%) are Finnish. The age range is from 19 to 23, with an average age of 20,95 years. The male to female ratio of the participants is 7:13. These twenty participants were split into four groups of five, each group satisfying the criterion for diversity, which means that every group must not be homogeneous in terms of gender or ethnicity. In other words, no group was comprised of entirely Finnish participants, Vietnamese participants, males, or females. The table below is designed to recapitulate the profiles of all twenty participants in a quick and easy to understand fashion. It categorizes participants in groups as well as summarizing key demographic factors such as age, gender, and nationality.

Group	Participant	Age	Gender	Nationality
1	Participant 1	19	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 2	21	Female	Finnish
	Participant 3	22	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 4	23	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 5	20	Male	Finnish
2	Participant 6	20	Male	Vietnamese
	Participant 7	20	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 8	21	Female	Finnish
	Participant 9	21	Female	Finnish
	Participant 10	23	Male	Vietnamese
3	Participant 11	23	Male	Finnish
	Participant 12	19	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 13	19	Male	Vietnamese
	Participant 14	22	Female	Finnish
	Participant 15	19	Female	Vietnamese
4	Participant 16	23	Female	Finnish
	Participant 17	22	Male	Vietnamese
	Participant 18	21	Female	Vietnamese
	Participant 19	21	Male	Vietnamese
	Participant 20	20	Female	Vietnamese

Table 1. *Participants' profiles in groups*

It is also worth taking into consideration that there exist many characteristics within the chosen group of participants that are capable of influencing the outcome of the experiment. Firstly, the participants have known or at least shared a class with the experiment moderator. Hence, the environment forged is one of informality where participants can express their uninhibited opinions without fear of being socially alienated or judged. Although this also fosters a sense of welcomeness for individual input, it

hampers the experiment process by instituting a lack of professionalism in the interactions between participants and the moderator. Therefore, the data collected may be partially influenced as a result. Secondly, the participants' experience with working in a diverse organization is limited, with some having little to no background in professional work settings. This presents some obstacles for the research objectives, which seek to delve deeper into the implications of priming for organizational applicability. However, as business students, the participants are well-equipped with business-oriented mindsets and should be qualified for a research of this scale, bearing in mind the risk of inaccuracies from this factor. Thirdly, due to qualitative nature of the experiment, the data garnered from each participant and their respective input are variable in amount and usefulness. Lastly, specific to the Vietnamese participants who all have spent months living in Finland and acclimatizing gradually to the European culture, their perspectives may have adapted and therefore would result in different results comparing to an alternative scenario where such participants selected had been residing in Vietnam instead.

3.2.2. Experiment moderation

The experiment is divided into two parts, which are conducted consecutively. The first part intends to prime the participants subconsciously with pre-existing concepts, while the second part examines the effectiveness of the technique through gathering participants' responses to a series of simulated questions. For both parts, materials were created to aid the process of experiment. These materials were prepared so that they would not embed additional biases into the participants' minds. Therefore, the materials were drafted in the font of Georgia, which conveys conventionalism and is least likely to influence readers in any significant way (Shaikh et al., 2006). All materials used in the experiment are enclosed at the end of this thesis under the appendices. For the purpose of this thesis, the experiment was conducted four times among four different groups. Each attempt was recorded and transcribed into a document in order to ensure the precision and accuracy of data. Before the experiment, all participants were informed that their private information and responses would remain anonymous and be kept confidential.

The input elicited from the participants will be used for the purpose of this thesis only. Exclusively for Vietnamese participants, responding in English was recommended, but not strictly enforced. Some participants felt more comfortable expressing their views in Vietnamese, and their opinions were recorded, transcribed, and translated into English as part of the compilation of data. The experiment proceeded after all the participants had consented to contribute to the research in this thesis.

In the first part, participants were asked to memorize 16 different adjectives in three minutes without taking any physical notes. After three minutes, they were checked to see how many words they remembered. For the purpose of this part, two separate lists of adjectives were prepared beforehand. One list contains adjectives that are commonly associated with good qualities expected in people, whereas the other consists of descriptive words with negative connotations that generally people would want to be disassociated from. Each participant in the same group was only shown one list and was unaware of the existence of the other. Group 1 and 3 was tasked with memorizing the words in the positive list, while group 2 and 4 managed the other list. The time limit for memorization was originally adjusted from five to three minutes after initial trials. It is found that in order for the words and concepts to prime the participants most effectively, the timing has to be meticulously calculated. In the case of the time limit being five minutes in the original version of the experiment, it was noted that some participants might find the time limit superfluous and resort to some means of distractions to pass the time, which did not bode well for the purpose of priming. Therefore, the time limit was reduced to three minutes, which seems like a more fitting allocation. The process of checking how many words each participant recalled was done individually, so as to attain the most accurate results. The reason for this individual inspection is to ensure the participants' memory would not be affected or influenced by other participants' answers, leading to possible errors. After all the words had been counted and checked for mistakes, the experiment advanced to the next part.

For this purpose of this part, every participant was shown, one at a time, the neutral descriptions of three people. The order of the descriptions was completely randomized,

and each participant proceeded to the next description after answering questions regarding the previous one. The descriptions were written and revised solely for the use of this research and are based on real life experiences and common cultural stereotypes. More explicitly, the three descriptions are inspired by three different demographic models, namely the adventurous and daring Caucasian man, the strong and independent young black woman, and the traditionalist Asian man. There are two questions for every description, which are the same for all descriptions. The only deviation between them was changing the names in the questions accordingly to correspond with the respective person. All responses were transcribed in real time and recorded as a safety precaution so that no important data would be missing.

The first question asked the participants to express their honest opinions on the person they had just been informed about based on the information given in the description above and their own personal judgements, which seeks to collect data for addressing the H1a and H1b hypotheses. This task is predicated on the idea that the participants would be influenced enough by the adjectives they had just been in contact with that it produced an observable effect on their responses. This is corroborated by an increased frequency in employing the recently acquainted words in the previous part (either out of convenience or a prolonged influence of the words in question) or an attitude leaning correspondingly towards a more positive or negative side after being exposed to that end of the spectrum. After the participants had stated their opinions on the fictitious profiles, they were asked whether they would want to, or would like to, become friends with these people. Rather than open-ended, the format and presentation of this question aim to guide participants into one of the two options: YES or NO, which aims to measure data for the H1c and H1d hypotheses. When all the answers had been collected and verified for eligibility for use in the thesis, the experiment concluded, and the participants were acknowledged for their time and effort in enabling the success of the experiment.

3.3. Data analysis

Immediately after each experiment attempt, the corresponding transcriptions were made on a word-by-word account into a Microsoft Word document. The four transcriptions were then carefully perused, and from there important data was singled out from the participants' responses and compiled into a discrete document for the sake of convenience. For the first part of the experiment, the data of significance that needed to be recorded include the number of words each participant remembered and, to a lesser extent, the specific words that were recalled. Concerning the second part, the responses were scanned and inspected for key words and phrases. Participants' answers were cleaned up and sorted for purpose of clarity. It is assured that no data was excluded by this refinement process. From there, the key words and phrases were subsequently classified into three categories based on their most prominent connotations: positive, negative, and neutral. The majority of placements were evidently self-explanatory, whereas some phrases proved to be more ambiguous and difficult to accurately categorized. Nonetheless, all words and phrases were eventually assorted under their most fitting labels.

The data analysis then took a quantitative direction, where the numbers of words and phrases subsumed under all classifications were counted and translated into percentage figures. With respect to the second question in the second part of the experiment to which participants were encouraged to give an unequivocal YES or NO as the answer, the number of YES's, NO's, and MAYBE's was tallied up and from there the frequency of each type of response was calculated in order to reflect the most common collective responses within each group. Additionally, as an indication of the extent of influence the first part of the experiment demonstrated upon the participants' subconscious, the number of times a word on the list was replicated was also recorded. From these figures and statistics, specific findings were reached. These findings will be presented descriptively in the next section.

IV. Findings

This section of the thesis will attempt to illustrate the significant findings that have been reached after the data collection and analysis stage. The findings will first be presented in the form of detailed summaries alongside with their visual illustrations as well as practical interpretations, which serves a basis for the discussion chapter.

4.1. Word counts

Based on the data collected during the first stage of the experiment where participants were asked to memorize a list of sixteen words, it was found that the average participant could remember 11,6 words. The most common number of words memorized spans between 11 and 12 words, which is around 70 to 75 percent of the words on each list. The average number of positive words remembered is 11,3 words, whereas the average number of negative words remembered is 11,9 words. These two numbers are close enough to indicate that there exists little evidence that the positive or negative connotations of the words can have an influence on the participants' memorizing mechanism.

However, not all words were replicated with similar frequency, as participants seemed to have developed a preference for the memorization of certain words and concepts over others. Specifically, words that are either at the top or bottom of the list, or words that are situated in close propinquity to those two areas, were much more likely to be chosen to remember. Additionally, those words are also much more likely to be replicated first. In direct contrast to this, words that cluster around the middle section were the most likely to be excluded. The ubiquity of certain words also seems to have facilitated the ease of memorization for most participants, given that commonplace and conventionally more familiar words were more liable to be reproduced by participants. This stands contradictorily against more arguably complicated words, which had a higher chance of being omitted. Interestingly, the length of the words had apparently no effects on whether a participant would opt to remember and repeat them. Commonly, it would be expected

for participants to favor shorter words with fewer syllables over longer ones due to the extra mental energy that needed to be exerted in order to memorize them. In actuality, however, the data from the experiment suggests that shorter and longer words stand a seemingly equal chance of being picked for memorization, and that word length is not a reliable indication in this regard by any means. For instance, one of the most overlooked words happened to be the shortest one on the list of negative adjectives (e.g. “vain”), whilst the most commonly repeated word on the same list was the longest (e.g. “opinionated”). It is worth taking into consideration that every participant has a different background in linguistics study and vocabulary tendency, which is why it is difficult to thoroughly examine the reasons behind each choice of words for memorization. Although the purpose of the experiment does not concern so much with what specific words were remembered but rather the mere quantity of those words, it is nevertheless intriguing to see whether the conceptualizations of those specific words would eventually impose any manipulations upon the participants’ responses.

For the sake of clarity and easy visualization, a table documenting the number of words each participant successfully memorized is enclosed below. To ensure briefness within the cells, P1 is used to denote ‘Participant 1’. The same format applies to all respective denotations in the table.

Word list	Group	Words remembered by each participant				
Positive	1	P1: 12	P2: 8	P3: 13	P4: 12	P5: 12
	3	P11: 13	P12: 10	P13: 10	P14: 12	P15: 11
Negative	2	P6: 11	P7: 15	P8: 14	P9: 12	P10: 12
	4	P16: 10	P17: 10	P18: 11	P19: 12	P20: 12

Table 2. *Number of words each participant remembered*

4.2. Participants' responses overview

As this part constitutes the most crucial part of the experiment where the effects of priming on the participants were identified and measured, this section will initially be divided into two parts in accordance with the positive and negative word lists. The first subsection will address the two groups that were presented with the list of positive adjectives, while the latter part will examine the results from the other two groups primed with the list of negative adjectives.

4.2.1. Group 1 and 3 (positively primed)

In the data analysis stage, the key words and phrases derived from the responses of participants were categorized into their most fitting labels according to the connotations they carried. Afterwards, they were counted, totaled up, and converted into statistics in order to demonstrate the results quantitatively.

As for the first group, who were tasked with memorizing positive adjectives, the data shows 59 accounts of participants using words with positive connotations to address the three fictional people based on the given neutral descriptions, which is remarkably higher comparing to 24 accounts of words with neutral connotations and 32 accounts of words with negative connotations. In other words, over fifty percent of the key ideas extracted from participants of this group exhibit positivity towards people they had just very recently learned of, which would suggest that the priming procedures utilizing positive words have successfully proven to be effective. However, in the follow-up question, where participants were asked if they would want to get acquainted with, or befriend the relevant profile in question, the results were not as affirmative. Out of fifteen answers (five participants answered to three profiles each), only six YES's were recorded as a confirmation of willingness to associate with the person being described, whereas there were five NO's and four MAYBE's. Although the question ideally did not allow for a MAYBE option, some participants opted for this choice as they did not feel comfortable with either of the YES or NO choice. The MAYBE's, despite still being retained from the data set, are rather inadmissible as reliable data, since they are too tentative to elicit any meaningful intention from and are not conclusive enough to determine whether a particular participant was leaning towards YES or NO.

The participants within this group also exhibited a clear influence from the list of positive words they had been exposed to, which manifested itself through many accounts of explicit repetition of words that are on the list. Particularly, out of 59 positive key words and phrases that were used to describe the fictitious profiles, 24 of them were replicated from the previously shown list, which translates to roughly 40 percent. This indicates potentially strong priming effects culminating from the priming process that had been done beforehand. For a clear and organized view of the results, a table with the necessary data is provided below.

Group 1		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	59	51,30%
	Neutral	24	20,87%
	Negative	32	27,83%
Answers	YES	6	40,00%
	NO	5	33,33%
	MAYBE	4	26,67%
Words replicated from list		24	40,68%

Table 3. Group 1's results

In the case of group 3, whose participants were handed the similar list and all other experiment conditions stayed relatively the same, the results bear striking similarities with those of group 1. As for accounts of words with positive connotations, it remains the highest for this group as well with 55 accounts, although the difference between this category and the number of negative words used has reduced marginally, with the latter increasing to 34 accounts. The number of neutral descriptors used also stays moderately constant at 20 accounts, which proves minimal differences compared to that of the first group.

However, as far as the follow-up question is concerned, there exists a clear distinction between these two groups, as the responses to this question are much more pronounced for group 3. More specifically, nine YES's out of a possible of fifteen were documented, leaving four NO's and two MAYBE's. This indicates a strong favorable feeling towards the participants' willingness to develop companionship with the people in question. Regarding the tendency of participants to repeat words from the preceding stage of the experiment, such phenomenon happened 18 times for this group, which represents a frequency of around 32 percent. This figure still shows a pattern of significance, but it implies a substantial reduction from the 40 percent repetition rate of the first group. In a similar

manner, a table summarizing the key data is also prepared below in order to illustrate the results of this group.

Group 3		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	55	50,46%
	Neutral	20	18,35%
	Negative	34	31,19%
Answers	YES	9	60,00%
	NO	4	26,67%
	MAYBE	2	13,33%
Words replicated from list		18	32,73%

Table 4. *Group 3's results*

The findings that have just been deduced from these two groups seem to indicate that participants were under certain influences brought on by the memorization task in the first step of the experiment. The responses of participants, in terms of key words and phrases, appear to skew predominantly towards positivity and affirmativeness, which correspond strongly with the theme of the first part. In order to provide a systematized look at both data sets ensuing from the experiment attempts concerning group 1 and 3, another table combining the results of both groups is located under this paragraph. From the cumulative table, it is clear to see that the repetition effect is evident, and it affects more than one-third of all responses elicited from participants.

Group 1 and 3		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	114	50,89%
	Neutral	44	19,64%
	Negative	66	29,46%
Answers	YES	15	50,00%
	NO	9	30,00%
	MAYBE	6	20,00%
Words replicated from list		42	36,84%

Table 5. *Positive groups results*

4.2.2. Group 2 and 4 (negatively primed)

Similar to the aforementioned two groups whose experiment results have just been articulated in the previous subsection, the outcome of the experiment done on group 2 and 4 also prompts several interesting finding. One such discovery is that although the participants were primed to be susceptible to negativity, their responses still demonstrate a propensity for positive value judgements over negative ones, as shown by the quantitative data garnered.

For group 2, there was, contrary to expectations, an overwhelming number of positive key words and phrases documented in relation to negative and neutral terms. Out of 66 key words and phrases recorded for this group, 37 of them were of favorable opinions, compared to the 26 terms of unfavorable opinions and only 3 terms that were classified as neutral. Although the number of positive expressions is fewer than 59 and 55 terms of group 1 and group 3 correspondingly, group 2 actually has the highest percentage of positive judgements overall, which stands at approximately 56% of all responses. However, the statistics reverted back to expectation when the answers to the follow-up

question were examined. Despite having the largest proportion of positive responses, the participants expressed strong reservations against acquainting themselves with the people in the three profiles if given the chance. Out of the fifteen times that this question was broached, there were an overwhelming eight NO's, five YES's, and two MAYBE's, which seems to indicate a rather interesting contrast from the first data set.

Another observation is that the number of negative terms used to describe the profiles that were borrowed from the previous list drops substantially comparing to other groups that have been examined. There were only eight accounts of word repetition, which is significantly lower than the positively primed groups, whose numbers of accounts both circulate around twenty each. Still, the eight accounts of repetition still constitute almost 31 percent of all negative words mentioned, which is not so drastically different from equivalent data of other groups. As per customary, the data for group 2 is also included in the form of a statistics table below.

Group 2		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	37	56,06%
	Neutral	3	4,55%
	Negative	26	39,39%
Answers	YES	5	33,33%
	NO	8	53,33%
	MAYBE	2	13,33%
Words replicated from list		8	30,77%

Table 6. *Group 2's results*

The data collected from group 4, while still bearing striking similarities to group 2 such as relatively identical answers to the follow-up question and few accounts of repetition, suggests some interesting piece of information on its own.

Firstly, this is the only group where the percentage of positive key words and phrases falls below 50 percent. Additionally, this group has the highest percentage of negative terms mentioned out of all groups, which lends a certain extent of gravity to the effects of negative semantics priming. Understandably, it also ranks the second-highest in percentage of NO answers as well as percentage of words replicated from list at approximately 47 and 35 percent respectively. Due to the recently mentioned characteristics and observations, this group seems to have been more influenced by negative priming effects than group 2, or at the very least the effects were much more noticeable, as demonstrated by the summary table that follows.

Group 4		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	41	48,24%
	Neutral	10	11,76%
	Negative	34	40,00%
Answers	YES	5	33,33%
	NO	7	46,67%
	MAYBE	3	20,00%
Words replicated from list		12	35,29%

Table 7. *Group 4's results*

Reflecting upon the combined data of group 2 and 4, many interesting and insightful observations can be drawn. Most prominently, for groups that were exposed to negative semantics, there appears to be a lack in neutrality and tentativeness. This absence of impartiality is implied through the participants' unwillingness or reservation to use neutral descriptors and reply MAYBE to the final question, resulting in low accounts for both categories.

Another finding is that, comparing to the collective results of group 1 and 3 who were positively primed, the number of key terms drops quite significantly from 224 to 151, which seems to signify that participants were reticent and unwilling to produce responses prolifically when negatively primed. Participants were also much less likely to replicate what they had just seen on the word list if the list contained negative connotations. This is deduced through the discrepancies between the number of words repeated during all four attempts, where positively primed groups exhibited a much more eager impulse to recreate the words they had just memorized. Given that there was no significant difference in the memorization capacity of all participants and most participants remembered the same number of words albeit positive or negative, the discrepancies in words reproduced are very unlikely to be due to lapses in memory.

However, it is also worth noting that although negatively priming participants seems to have produced fewer key words and phrases than positively priming them, the number of negative terms used as descriptors stays relatively stable amongst all experiment attempts. In the positive groups, there were 114 accounts of positive terms and 66 negative ones. Whereas in the negative groups, the equivalent accounts are reduced to only 78 for positive and 60 for negative. This indicates that priming people with negative semantics does not increase the chances for negative value judgements against others but rather disable the positive ones. Although the neutral terms are too uncertain to draw any kind of informed conclusion from, its drastic decrease in quantity and frequency seems to suggest that as people become more negatively prone, their decisions and judgements become much less influenced by impartiality.

Group 2 & 4		Number of accounts	Percentage
Key words and phrases	Positive	78	51,66%
	Neutral	13	8,61%
	Negative	60	39,74%
Answers	YES	10	33,33%
	NO	15	50,00%
	MAYBE	5	16,67%
Words replicated from list		20	33,33%

Table 8. *Negative groups results*

4.2.3. Relationship between word counts and responses

In order to examine the possible relationship between participants' individual word counts and the extent to which they affect their overall responses, the specific responses of participants who attained a high word memorization count. A high word count in this context is defined as higher than the most common number, which is from thirteen words and above. There are four out of twenty participants who satisfy this condition, namely Participant 3, Participant 7, Participant 8, and Participant 11.

Out of these four specific cases, Participant 11 displayed marginal discrepancies from the normal amount of input comparing to participants within the same group, which seems to signify no evidence of extra influences. However, Participant 3 and Participant 7's data suggests that they were potentially manipulated more in the intended direction. Particularly, Participant 3, who was positively primed and memorized thirteen words, gave the most comments and opinions out of everyone, and these opinions mostly ranged from neutral to positive. Out of 41 key words and terms this participants opted to use, only six of them were classified as having negative connotations. Similarly, Participant 7, who was

negatively primed and memorized fifteen words, only offered four positive value judgements as opposed to ten negative and zero neutral ones. This ratio is higher than most participants' and seems to indicate a stronger influence by negative semantics.

Participant 8's responses provide an interesting case. Despite being negatively primed and successfully remembering fourteen words, the key words and phrases this participant produced were overwhelmingly positive and did not comply with any patterns at all. To be specific, Participant 8's answers contained seventeen key terms, and fourteen of them skewed in the positive direction, and one favored impartiality. The anomalous data suggests that this participant may be an outlier, which indicates potential unreliability that can be put down to individual differences. However, when individual differences are factored into the reasons affecting participants' choice of words, it discounts previous arguments on the legitimacy of extra influences some participants were supposedly undergoing. Due to the small sample size of this study, which only involves twenty participants, the risk of having unreliable data is quite high. Therefore, it is uncertain whether there exists a correlation between high word memorization counts and additional priming influences.

4.2.4. Demographic-based differences

After careful assessment of each participant's individual responses in order to detect whether certain demographic variables have affected the quantity and quality of output, it was found that no conclusive evidence existed to support the idea that such differences were prevalent. All participants, barring extreme outlier cases, seem to possess similar memorization capability, as shown by their relatively stable number or word counts. Whether a participant is male or female or belongs to the Caucasian or Asian ethnic group appears to impose no significant influences on the outcome of the experiment. In fact, the most egregious difference in the quantity of output between different sets of groups has already been discussed and attributed to the effects of positive semantics priming. Hence, no other discrepancies have emerged that would suggest that demographic factors play a contributive role in the results obtained from the research procedures.

V. Discussion

In this section, the implications of the findings will be discussed in relation with the research questions and what has been written in the literature review. The ultimate aim of this section is to provide an adequately reasonable answer to the chief research question and revisit the topics previously examined in existing literature with a new perspective in the light of recently uncovered findings. In addition, the recent findings also necessitate a re-inspection of the proposed conceptual framework in order to see whether the framework corroborates or contradicts the findings.

5.1. Influences of positive and negative semantics priming on participants' value judgements and willingness of association

The literature review establishes two distinct viewpoints on the applicability of priming due to its contentious nature. While Weingarten et al. (2016) stresses the potency of priming to implement subtle departures in routine thoughts and behaviors, Doyen et al. (2012) impugns the veracity of such influences and states that priming is insufficient to elicit observable changes. In this thesis, the results reached seem to concur with the former theory. Semantics priming appears to have produced a noticeable and documentable effect on the sample of selected participants in that the responses of the two sets of groups showed marked discrepancies from each other. As demonstrated in the previous section, the differences are too pronounced to be based on purely coincidental occurrences. There are many aspects of the data which all seem to point towards the same conclusion, including the key words and phrases quantitative analysis and the collective answers of participants to the final question in the experiment. However, due to the limited sample and opportunities for experiment moderation, there is no way of knowing for certain if these same effects persist for all participants undergoing the same experiment under the same conclusions. As Doyen et al. (2012) mentioned, replicating priming experiments, even in environments that have been controlled for maximum similarities to the original, does not guarantee the same results being reproduced. For the purpose of this thesis, there were only two experiment attempts for each of positive and

negative semantics priming, which is too small a number for the study to arrive at any conclusive results about the credibility of the data.

The data set also suggests that through the implementation of positive semantics priming, organizations can enhance tolerance for individual differences and learn how to deliver constructive feedback instead of unhelpful criticism. From the responses of participants primed with positive connotations, it is observed that they were more tolerant and understanding of the characteristics depicted in the fictional profiles. They were also more observant and less likely to resort to derogatory or pejorative terms to describe individual differences they seemed to hold reservations against. Instead, these participants appeared to opt for the choice of neutral and impartial phrases, a phenomenon unseen in groups that were negatively primed. This indicates an emerging pattern of tolerance and acceptance, which correspond with the two of the necessary preconditions outlined in order to achieve the Learning-and-Effectiveness paradigm, a successful and promising model for effectual diversity management (Thomas and Ely, 1996).

Regarding the method of semantics priming, as this research confirms the potential of such a technique in altering people's subconscious, it can serve as a precedence for other types of priming to be evaluated for applicability in the workplace. As briefly discussed in the literature review, other types of priming exist, and they have been proven through many experiments to produce various influences on the targeted sample, such as visual and olfactory priming. For visual priming, due to the numerous ways in which the brain reacts to different color schemes (Gerend and Sias, 2009), there are many possibilities for experimenting. For olfactory priming, which involves evoking feelings through the exposure to a strong smell or fragrance (Koenig et al., 2000), the opportunities for manipulation are also near limitless. Both these techniques, although they require meticulous planning, they can be done with simple preparation and can readily be applied pragmatically in an organizational setting as soon as all the relevant implications have been acknowledged. These options are far from exhaustive, however, and managers can allow themselves to choose whichever method they deem the most fitting for their situation as well as their objectives.

5.2. Demographic factors

Although there are certain factors that may have influenced the outcome of the experiment, they were not believed to have altered the findings in any significant ways. Most of these factors are related to the demographics of the sample size that have been briefly discussed in the literature review section. Despite the fact that the data gathered implies minimal differences between participants of different genders and ethnicities, it is advisable that these factors be explored in order to attain a thorough comprehension of their potential influences. In a larger scale research, these factors may prove to assume a more decisive role in affecting the end results.

As some of the participants chosen are of Finnish descent, their Caucasian background may have particular influences on the way they perceive others' diversity. Gilbert et al. (2003) contends that as Caucasian employees are rarely underrepresented and underappreciated in the workplace, they might be oblivious to the struggles of their more culturally diverse counterparts. Similarly, in the experiment setting, the Vietnamese participants might have been able to detect subtle nuances that the Finnish participants did not notice or pay attention to. The same applies for male versus female employees, as Heilman (2012) noted that many achievements readily attainable by men may not be of equal access to women, which results in a dichotomous conflict of perspective from both sides. As for age as a variable, this particular study could not provide any data relevant to it due to the fact that all volunteers available to be chosen as participants are of the same age group. Therefore, the experiment lacks a diverse representation on this spectrum.

The observations above present several implications for priming for the purpose of enhancing diversity management. As defined in the literature review, diversity management involves activities that 'recruit, retain, reward, and promote a heterogeneous mix of employees' (Ivancevich and Gilbert, 2000). Therefore, it is innately concerned with the demography of its constituents. As per priming, one of the most prominent criticism

against it is that there are too many variables at stake when interfering with the subconscious mind that it precipitates unreliable inconsistencies (Doyen et al., 2012). Several of these variables are directly pertinent to individual differences or demographic factors. Therefore, it is crucial to bear these internal influences in mind when utilizing priming as psychological technique. As both diversity management and priming have an intrinsic variable in demography, the procedures and action plans proposed that rely on the connection between these two fields should be pondered carefully.

5.3. Revised conceptual framework

From the discussion above, it is imperative to revisit the conceptual framework presented in the literature review above (see Figure 1). For the most part, the findings corroborate with what is illustrated by the conceptual framework. Positive and negative semantics priming seems to be capable of imposing a noticeable effect over participants' value judgements and willingness to associate with people of different backgrounds and cultures, skewing their thoughts and behaviors towards the corresponding end of the spectrum. This influence is contributive to the way people perceive different types of diversity and how they react in situations involving them. As far as positive priming is concerned, it also facilitates the process of diversity management by fostering understanding and tolerance in the workplace, which are two of the key factors that enable the success of managing diversity, as noted in the preconditions necessary for a paradigm shift (Thomas and Ely, 1996).

However, there are some minor points where the conceptual framework contradicts with the findings. In the case of hypothesis H1b, the data suggests that the opposite actually occurs. The number of negative key terms did not experience a boost in quantity, but instead negative semantics priming precipitated a sharp decrease in the number of positive and neutral words and phrases. Although this phenomenon still technically resulted in a rise in the rate of participants using negative terms, it did not do so through the method mentioned in the hypothesis, which warrants a small fix in the conceptual

framework to indicate it. This correction is made through separating the effects of positive and negative semantics priming.

Another point needs updating is the signification of external influences for diversity management schemes and internal or demographical influences for semantics priming. As maximizing control over these factors entails innumerable challenges, it is crucial that their presence be included into the conceptual framework as a constant reminder of their influences. The revised conceptual framework is presented in Figure 2 on the next page.

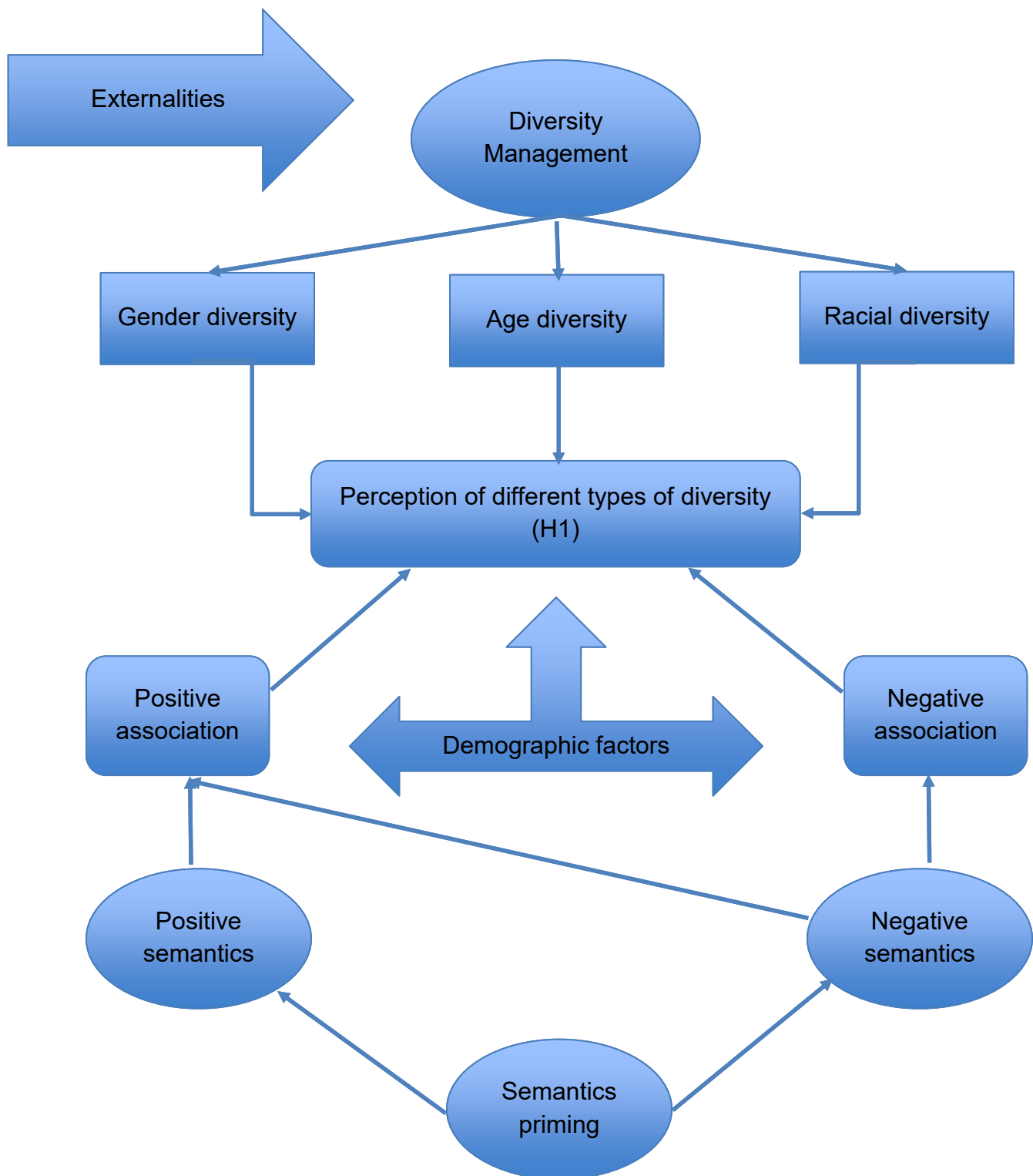


Figure 2. Revised conceptual framework

VI. Conclusion

The conclusion of this thesis consists of the reiteration of the main findings that have been reached through the research process, the implications of such findings for the field of International Business, and the suggestions for future studies aiming at similar directions based on the limitations and shortcomings of the experiment procedures included in the thesis.

6.1. Main findings

Although the research conducted for the purpose of this thesis relies on qualitative data gathered in a small scale and consequently cannot provide sufficient evidence to either validate or disprove the pragmatic values of priming in serving as an aid to diversity management strategies, it has, to a certain extent, succeeded in addressing the proposed research questions by pinpointing the relationship between semantics and individual thoughts and behaviors. To recapitulate the significant results the research has discovered, this section will attempt to present a concise reiteration of the main findings reached through the process of experiment.

Firstly, according to the data retrieved from groups whose participants were primed semantically with positive adjectives, it appears that the process of positive priming encourages the proliferation of output. Participants of these groups were found to produce significantly more admissible key words and phrases in two categories (positive and neutral) than the other two groups that were negatively influenced. This corresponds well with hypothesis H1a, as positive priming was shown to increase the number of positive value judgements from participants. Especially in the case of neutral terms, albeit too tentative to signify real intentions on the part of the respondents, the number of impartial words and phrases dropped drastically when the participants underwent negative semantics priming. The quantity of positive terms admittedly subsided as well, although not as strongly. Positively primed groups, in addition to providing more key words, also

replicated more than twice as many words from the list they were acquainted with than negatively primed groups.

Interestingly, however, in all four attempts of the experiment, the number of accounts of participants using negative key words or phrases remains relatively consistent. Instead, it would seem that negative semantics actually reduced participants' production of positive and neutral terms as opposed to inspiring more negative accounts. What this is suggesting contrasts sharply with hypothesis H1b, where negative priming is expected to boost the occurrence rate of negative judgements. Contrary to expectations, negative priming appears to impede the production of all key term categories, most severely the neutral terms. Due to this decrease in overall key words and phrases and the fact that negative word counts stay steady in these groups, the rate of participants using negative terms is also considerably higher. Negative semantics priming seems to deter people from giving ambiguous or tentative responses as well, as the decline in neutral terms points out.

Regarding the responses to the final question in the experiment, where participants were asked to evaluate their willingness to befriend a certain fictitious character, the collective results seem to skew according to expectations. The positively primed groups predominantly favored the affirmative option, while the negatively primed groups displayed an overwhelming inclination towards the opposite choice. This corroborates with two of the hypotheses proposed in the introduction section, namely hypotheses H1c and H1d.

Lastly, due to the modest size of the participant sample, the data set does not indicate the existence of a meaningful relationship between participants memorizing more words and their answers being more influenced. Although there were some cases worth scrutinizing, they appear to be outliers and no patterns have emerged that would signify the correlation between remembering more words and retaining more positive or negative influences. There also appears to be minor differences between male and female respondents as well as between Finnish and Vietnamese respondents. However, the

differences were not pronounced enough to be qualified as significant and can be relegated to individual preferences instead. A research of larger scale with a bigger sampling pool may find these demographic-based differences to be of more significance.

6.2. Implications for International Business

Despite the limited scope and the inability of this study to provide highly reliable findings, it can still prove to be useful by offering several reasonable implications to improve organizational perception of diversity and diversity management strategies.

The most profound recommendation drawn from this research is pertaining to the use of organizational language and communication. According to the data gathered, there is a strong correlation that positive and constructive communication begets favorable impressions which, in turn, result in even more positive communication. On a similar note, due to the capacity of negative language to disrupt the atmosphere of positivity, it is crucial to encourage the use of positive connotations in the workplace to boost morale and enhance effectiveness. This implication may prove to be extremely useful in building communication channels and strategies. Especially in international business settings, where cross-cultural and cross-national communication play a pivotal role in the success of the organization and conflicts can easily arise from misunderstandings, reinventing the way people communicate can have profound implications on the organizational functionality as a whole. Effective communication can also reinvigorate employees and bolster their job satisfaction. From a human resource management point of view, this translates to lower turnover cost and training cost for new recruits.

Another implication that could be of importance to International Business is the legality aspect of priming. In order for priming to function the way it is intended to, priming subjects must not be aware of the priming process, otherwise they will be susceptible to response bias which defeats the purpose of priming (Pace et al., 1997). This precondition might straddle the line of ethical conduct for managers, who run the risk of standing accused of manipulating unsuspecting employees. Priming should only be used with the sole

purpose of facilitating and accommodating the effective operation of the organization, not for nefarious intentions. Hence, priming should always entail meticulous planning, strategic execution, and a strong code of ethics in its core purpose.

6.3. Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although the experiment succeeded in providing some degree of meaningful conclusions, there are still several limitations that need to be addressed in order to improve the quality of future research of the same interest. From these limitations, suggestions will be proposed to ensure improvements in the procurement of data in similar studies in the future.

First, the sample size of the experiment was limited in demographical representation. Due to reasons of convenience and geographical restrictions, only two nationalities, Finnish and Vietnamese, were available to be chosen to participate in the study. This consequently leads to a dichotomous sample based on ethnicity, which may result in some data that would have been gathered in a more diverse sample being disregarded entirely. The participants also vary only marginally in terms of age and education level. As stated in the methodology section, all participants are between 19 and 23 years of age, which represent only a small segment of employed people. There certainly exist other age groups in the workplace that this study has not been able to reach. Furthermore, as all participants are college students, and most have little work experience, their mindsets and attitudes may be predisposed to different influences, especially when comparing to actual working employees. Due to these restrictions in availability for a diverse group of participants, the results of this experiment cannot be generalized for a bigger population.

Additionally, the environments in which the experiments were conducted in were not controlled for external distractions. As the same experiment was done on four separate occasions, there were difficulties constructing an adequately stable environment which allows for an acceptable degree of uniformity in all attempts. The experiment was also

conducted in two different locations at different time. These externalities, when being factored into consideration, expose some problems regarding the reliability and credibility of the data and consequent findings. There also was not enough time to administer the experiment more times or organizing more groups of participants, which could have helped to solidify the findings. Given that this limitation arises from the experiment being conceived and conducted on a small scale and with restricted resource, future endeavors capable of performing large-scale studies should be able to avoid this problem and reduce the risk of inaccuracies.

Lastly, although the participants were expected and heavily implied to be aware that the three fictional profiles represented different variables in terms of the diversity spectrum, there was no way of knowing for certain without compromising the purpose of the experiment to the participants. Apart from several participants who noticed and actually disclosed their findings in words, the majority did not indicate any signs of recognizing any differences even though it is highly likely that they had managed to do so. Still, the assumption cannot be guaranteed on the part of every participant. Therefore, this experiment's ability to draw a definitive conclusion about whether semantics priming affects different types of diversity remains questionable due to insufficient data. Later experiments are recommended to include guided question prompts in order to accurately gauge such reactions from participants.

Based on the aforementioned limitations which substantially narrow down the scope of the experiment, future studies should make attempts to overcome the sampling challenges as well as curtailing the influences of external factors. Specifically, selecting a well-diversified sample of participants in terms of gender, age, and cultural backgrounds is essential to the purpose of experiments of this type, as it allows for a more thorough and inclusive set of data which in turn enables more meaningful conclusions to be established. Furthermore, for experiments whose main goals are the identification and estimation of influences on the subconscious mind, it is imperative for moderators to prepare a controlled environment where participants' susceptibility to externalities is minimized. Also, should the same experiment be conducted multiple times, the same

testing environment, or at least different environments that have been replicated to have maximum similarities, should be used in order to ensure a certain extent of consistency among various attempts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Lists of adjectives

Positive adjectives

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------|
| 1 | - | adventurous |
| 2 | - | independent |
| 3 | - | diligent |
| 4 | - | courageous |
| 5 | - | cheerful |
| 6 | - | energetic |
| 7 | - | imaginative |
| 8 | - | free |
| 9 | - | consistent |
| 10 | - | successful |
| 11 | - | creative |
| 12 | - | determined |
| 13 | - | confident |
| 14 | - | ambitious |
| 15 | - | friendly |
| 16 | - | straightforward |

Negative adjectives

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------|
| 1 | - | stupid |
| 2 | - | dangerous |
| 3 | - | selfish |
| 4 | - | stubborn |
| 5 | - | reckless |
| 6 | - | vain |
| 7 | - | irresponsible |
| 8 | - | annoying |
| 9 | - | egotistic |
| 10 | - | indecisive |
| 11 | - | flippant |
| 12 | - | arrogant |
| 13 | - | opinionated |
| 14 | - | rude |
| 15 | - | nosy |
| 16 | - | aggressive |

Appendix 3: Neutral descriptions of people**Ron**

Ron spends a lot of his time on looking for what he likes to call excitement. Once, he climbed the highest skyscraper in his town. He has also drifted with the currents of the Colorado river by pontoon, taken part in rodeos, done bungee jumping, and driven a jet boat – without knowing much about boats in general. He is always searching for new emotions, sometimes risking his life in the process. He is considering doing acrobatic tricks while parachuting or traveling through the Atlantic Ocean by canoe. He is convinced about his ability to do things well. Except for professional affairs, his interactions with others are limited. He feels he does not need help from anyone. When Ron makes his mind up, you can consider it done no matter how difficult the goal is. He often sticks firmly to his opinions and values, even though they are questionable sometimes.

Please describe Ron in your own words.

In my opinion, Ron is . . .

If you met Ron, would you become friend with him?

YES NO

Eboni

Eboni always shows up at work with a smile on her face and a latte in her hand. She likes to make small talks with everyone in the office about either professional or personal matters. In meetings, she always has the most input regarding whatever topic being discussed. She makes sure her opinions are heard and does not shy away from heated debates against people of different views.

Eboni is very active on social media. She posts photos on a daily basis, mostly of meals, parties, and inspirational quotes. When on social media, she frequently leaves playful comments under others' online posts. She also has a very keen interest in cosmetics and fashion, and habitually wakes up at 6.30 every day to get ready for work.

Please describe Eboni in your own words.

In my opinion, Eboni is . . .

If you met Eboni, would you become friend with her?

YES NO

Neville

Being a first-generation Chinese-American, Neville takes great pride in his heritage. He sets his sight on working up the corporate ladder very early on. At work, he does not engage in banters with others but always chooses to concentrate on his work instead. He also tends to decline invitations to office parties and rarely stays for long after work. He believes it is unprofessional to display strong emotions at work. If someone asks something non-work related while he is working, he would reply in as few words as possible, so that he does not lose focus on what he is working on. The high quality of his work has rewarded him with promotions and respect from superiors and colleagues alike. However, he does not seem to merge well socially with them.

Please describe Neville in your own words.

In my opinion, Neville is ...

If you met Neville, would you become friend with him?

YES NO

Appendix 4: Moderator's script for overseeing the experiment

Introduction

Hello and welcome you to my experiment! This experiment is conducted for the purpose of gathering data for my Bachelor's thesis. All data collected will be used in the thesis only, and your private information will remain confidential. This experiment is recorded to ensure I do not miss any critical information. Your insightful input is very valuable to me as it will help guide me through the following steps of the thesis process. Do you have any questions so far?

If you have no more questions, we shall begin the experiment right now.

Part 1

In front of you is a list of sixteen different words. You will have three minutes to try to memorize as many words as you possibly can without taking any notes. After three minutes have passed, I will collect the paper and check how many words you remember. You do not have to repeat them in the correct order. Your time starts now.

Part 2

Here in my hands are three descriptions of three different people. These descriptions are neutral, and you will read through them and answer the questions below. There are two questions which are the same for each description. The first question asks you to offer your honest opinions on the person and re-describe them according to your own words. The second question is a follow-up to that, and it checks whether you would like or would want to be friends with this character if you met them in real life. You can take all the time you need for this part, and we will go through each profile one at a time. After you are done with one person, we will move on to the next and so forth.

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your cooperation and input! The experiment is now complete. Please refrain from disclosing the content of the experiment to anyone as they may be participants for the next attempt. Have a nice day!